



NextGen Housing Research

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sized

on size

Chapter 07

NextGen Housing Research

“Super size me”

The Australian Dream in recent years has become “The Australian Obsession”. This is result of the Australian psyche driven by a self-centred system, where by ones happiness is achieved through the possession of materialistic things. Fiona Allon author of, “Renovation Nation” suggests how in recent times the Australian house has become an ever more important capital asset to the ordinary household. The economic structure of financial institutes have provided mortgages to Australians as a response to the socio obsession to improve, upgrade and renovate our homes . More than often the size of our home reflects the size of our mortgages. ³

Our housing obsession has manifested into what is now known as the “Mac Mansions Syndrome”. These are urban expanding investments which have populated on the outskirts of the various cities. They are large two or three storey homes with double and sometimes triple garages, mostly found in high density clusters in low density outer suburbs. This model of housing enables the user “upsized or super size”, there housing package.

This obsession is also fuelled by our political systems, the social changes as well as our obsession with the economy. Allon notes, Our obsession not only transforms the houses we live in and the cities, places and communities around us but has profound consequences for how we understand our sense of identity. ⁴

³ Allon, FA,2008; 'Renovation Nation' Australian obsession with housing: UNSW Press, Sydney.

⁴.ibid



“Select your option”



Trend

Vogue



Contemporary

Traditional

“ McMansion status ”

At a global scale, the size of the average house is getting larger and larger. The house in today's society can be seen as the aspired status symbol. As the Masters Builders Associations of Australia confirms, 'Housing is the Status Symbol, reiterating the idea of 'bigger the house the bigger status.

“ Suburban spirit ”

In the last decade, there has been an increase in suburban developments. As stated in Bernard Salts book, “The Big shift”, Australians like low- density urban living and they have space and resources to live this way.³ The new era in suburban living can be seen as a stark contrast between previous models of suburban living. Previously seen as the celebration of equality and the Australian Domestic Spirit; its uniformity was believed to be the cause of absence in ridged distinctions of social rank. ⁴



3 Salt, BS: 2001: 'The Big Shift' welcome to the third Australian culture': Hardy Grant Publishing; Victoria

4 Allon, FA, 2008; 'Reovation Nation' Australian obsession with housing: UNSW Press, Sydney.

“ Suburban fuel ”

Fuelling this expansion into the suburbs are the Australian McMansions. They are otherwise known as “the people's mansions”, some would argue affordable mansions within reach of the Australian Dream. These houses are constructed with inexpensive materials not otherwise known by ordinary Australians. The purchasers of the Mc Mansion house are now the new middle class who have middle to upper incomes. However the current range of middle class income is extremely broad. Mass produced houses at one stage were seen as an inexpensive way of achieving home ownership. While some are still regarded as being reasonably priced, the average home would take approximately 20 – 30 year mortgage.





“ Bigger then yours”

The “absolute glamour” mega mansion in a typical suburban area would consist of 5 bedrooms, private theatre, gymnasium , four garages, large pool, floodlit tennis courts and Zen inspired garden setting. The average mega mansion would be sold for about \$2.5 million dollars. These houses would also come with “optional upgrades” such as designer kitchens, marble bathrooms, French doors, granite bench tops and gold plated fixtures which are all adding to the Australian “Status Symbol”.



“ It was tough ”

The shift can also be seen in the process of acquiring a new home to its construction. Traditionally, many homeowners had constructed their houses by themselves, otherwise known as owner builders. Allon States, “That the true Aussie home was constructed in DIY tradition and each built their castle with their blood sweet and tears” ³. The acquisition these houses were also nothing less than a challenge. The process started in with a deposit for the block of land, mostly paid in installments. Once that was paid off, the building works started which was a job that was shared amongst friends and family.

³ Allon, FA,2008; 'Reovation Nation' Australian obsession with housing: UNSW Press, Sydney

“Gardens, where’d they go”

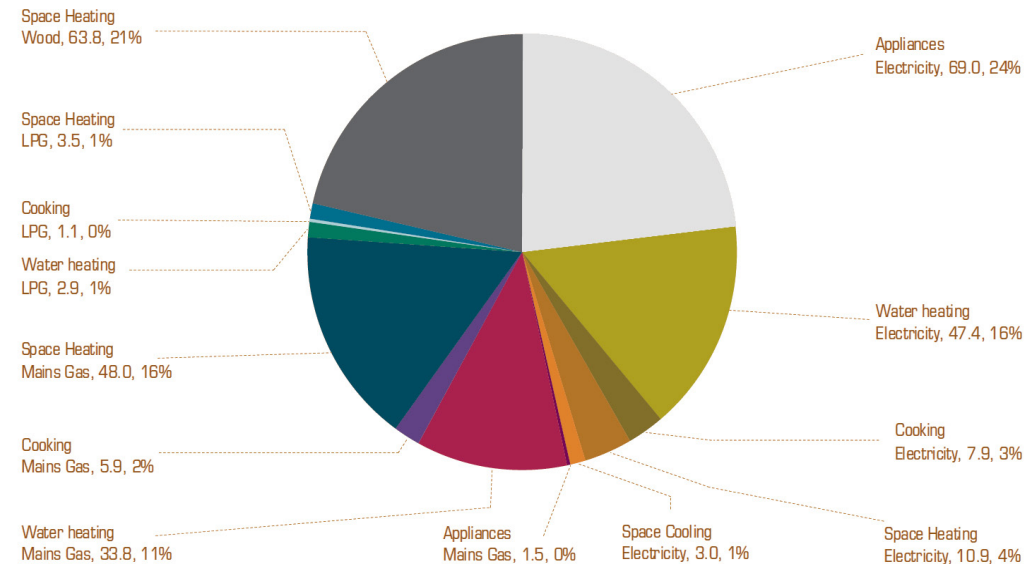
Traditionally “the land” and “the garden” was regarded as a highly valuable. Smaller houses of the time activated the outdoor living spaces, where bigger garden and backyards promoted an active lifestyle and a more sustainable approach to living. Michael Day, author of the article, “We need more and bigger gardens”, suggests how the inflation of housing with less yards is creating a generation of people who are less engaged with the outdoors. Day notes how these occupants are living in bigger, emptier houses in which they play Nintendo Wii, on their 50inch TV’s, whilst enjoying their own bedrooms, en-suites, spa rooms, rumpus rooms and theatre rooms. All a result of Australians thinking “big houses” not “big gardens”³



³ Day, Michael, 2010: “We need more, and bigger, gardens, not McMansions” The AGE; <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/we-need-more-and-bigger-gardens-not-mcmansions-20100129-n356.html>

“Gas guzzlers”

The Australian Dream, the McMansion in simply terms is true blue gas guzzler. Our obsession with size has created a very unsustainable dwelling space. Day in his article notes that Ninety-five per cent of Australia’s current housing stock (big and small) operates on or below a 2.5 star energy rating. Medium density houses (detached dwellings) account for 12 per cent of Australia’s energy consumption. Our preference for big houses has gained us the international ranking of a residential carbon footprint nearly four times the global average³. Statistics below further go to prove how luxuriously we use energy to power our fortresses. The average McMansion spends approximately a quarter of its energy consumption in heating the spaces. This is also matched by household appliances which do not have good energy efficiency.



³ Day, Michael, 2010: “We need more, and bigger, gardens, not McMansions” The AGE; <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/we-need-more-and-bigger-gardens-not-mcmansions-20100129-n356.html>

“Where do we stand”



“Comparing the two”

When comparing the Australian residential housing model to the Japanese, it is brutally apparent we occupy close to 3 times more than the national average of Japan. The Japanese have essentially redefined their perceptions of space, privacy and livability. The roots of their understanding stems from their connection to the eastern philosophy. This is a more spiritual focused nature, very much opposite to the Australian philosophy of capital Gain.

The Japanese have a rich housing history and is reflected in many of the various styles of housing. As history has played its cards, with the world wars, so has the Japanese style of living evolved. Through the following timeline we are able to see the adaptations each country has made in response to social, political and economic trends of the periods

Pit dwelling



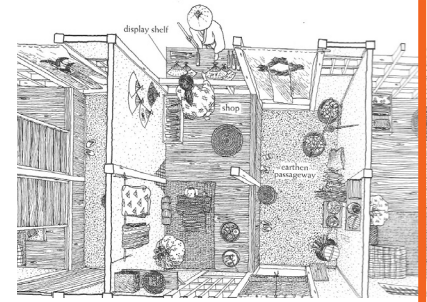
Heian Towers



Samuri residents



Medieval townhouses



400 B.C

710's

1450's

1650's

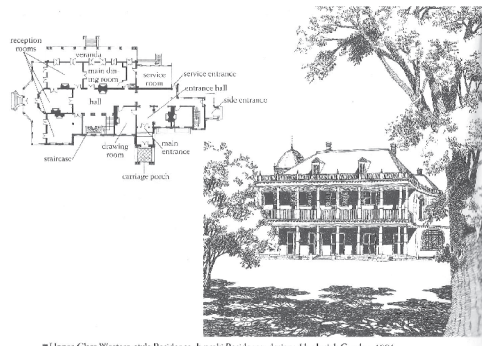
Australia had not been founded

Japanese

Australian

Revised Japanese tax system.

High taxes on land so farmers preferred to sell



■ Upper-Class Western-style Residence: Iwasaki Residence, designed by Josiah Conder, 1891

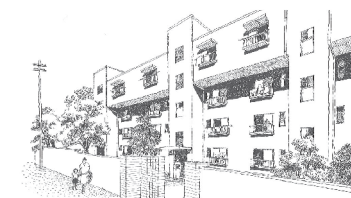
Western Influence on style were limited to a very small segment of society, mostly the nobility, high-ranking government officials.

- Houses were designed for luxury not necessity.
- Row houses for coal miners

- **New type of housing "Inner Corridor"**
- **Western influence** with independence to individual rooms
- Mid sized house with living rooms, sitting rooms, servant rooms, kitchen, bathroom and verandah.

As the number of **middle-class office workers increased, they began to want better living conditions and homes of their own.** They were getting used to Western-style living habits, and they were no longer satisfied with Japanese-style rented houses.

Culture houses began to appear in large numbers in high-class residential areas and on the outskirts of the cities



Reinforced Concrete apartments targeted to middle income group or factory workers.

Single units and family units

New features like elevators, kitchens with chutes, baths, communal washing areas etc. Wooden houses in outer suburbs had poor living conditions

1870's

1890's

1910's

1920's

1930's

1945's



British influence was very noticeable, this influence was reflected in Georgian style of house built.

The gold rushes brought many new settlers, and with them came new style.

- Decoration of roofline with a carved bargeboard



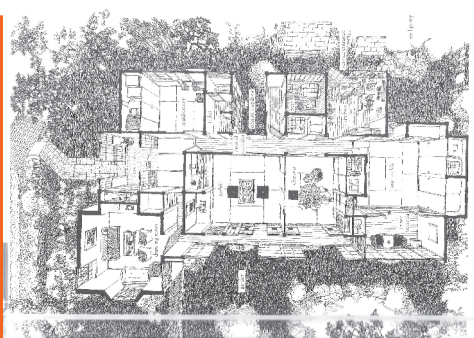
Prominent Styles used for houses.

Californian bungalow

The Victorian House

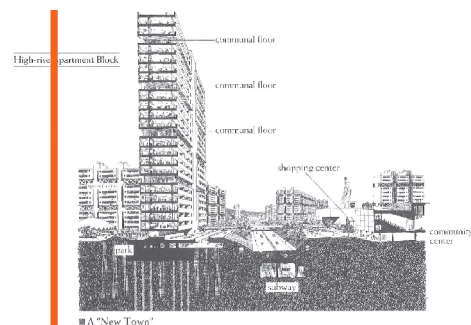


From 1930s to end of World War II in 1945, the building of houses was minimal because of shortage of money for housing. Small houses of fibro and weatherboard provided shelter for families in metropolitan areas



Postwar housing was the government decision to provide rental apartments blocks (danchi) in large quantities for workers in the cities, in particular for ordinary people of the middle and working classes.

1960's



These Corporation apartment buildings ranged in height from four or five stories to more than a dozen stories. Their construction was accompanied by efforts to improve the environment through rezoning the land and providing facilities such as parks for children, parking areas, and bicycle lots.

1990's



Japanese principal driving force behind the construction of high-rise dwellings has been the high cost of land, the general shortage of housing, and the fact that open spaces can be easily created around such structures.

2000's

Due to scarcity of land and fast redevelopment of electronic industry people were more individualistic and advanced techniques of construction were introduced. Like Prefabricated houses, capsule houses,



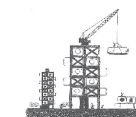
Housing Developments
Housing developments are a byproduct of the development of the country. The idea, carried out of what was originally a central land, apartment many small units, such as a lack of proper community facilities. However, because high rising people who desire of living in town of their own.



Prefabricated Homes
Built by assembling factory made system. These houses are in construction quality with cheapness, but each after receive high value construction notes from unavailability to the central state of their construction.



"Two-by-four" Homes
The "two-by-four" home construction method, imported from the United States, involves the use of standard lumber that is readily available and low in cost. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost.



Capsule Apartments
This method entails attaching small prefabricated components, in the form of capsules, to a main framework. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost. It has the advantage of being easy to build and low in cost.

2010's

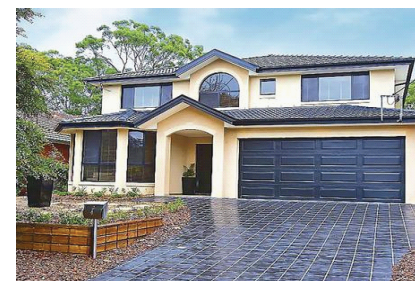
Commonwealth government built hostels to provide accommodation for immigrants from European countries. The postwar dream of many people were to have own detached house in suburbs. Due to increased production of building materials building cost reduced making home ownership dream come true.



McMansion super-sized the suburbs



By the 1960s, the next generation had more money, moved up to brick veneer and increased the size slightly.



We can find new style homes similar to postmodern suburban bungalow styles. The Spanish Mission style, The American Colonial Style, Mexican Hacienda, English Tudor Style. **Cheap quality construction.**
Gas gazzers

Australia has the world's biggest houses at an average of 230 sq m, pipping the United States (214 sq m) and dwarfing European houses, including those in Britain, which average just 176 sq m.

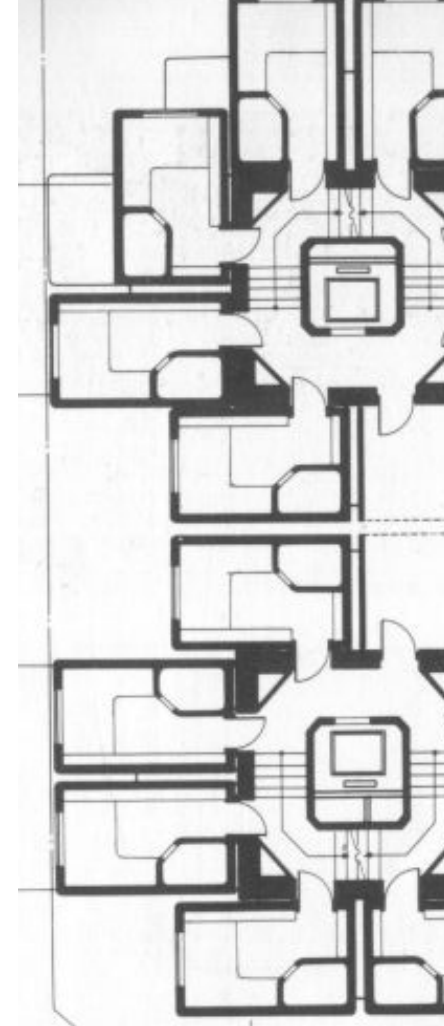


“The Capsule”

The Nakagin residential/ office tower was the first of its kind in capsule architecture to be actually built and fully functioning. Capsule architecture was seen as a breakthrough architectural achievement whereby you could insert capsules rooms into a mega structure that worked harmoniously with other components of the building.

Nakagin Capsule is driven from the ideas of mass productions and new expression to the Japanese culture. This style of architecture feeds into the ‘express’ culture of most Japanese people living in the city. The architecture is suggestive of an organic manifestation of growth which can occur over time. The building is responsive of its environment, the social and economic trends at the time as well as being actively engaged with its core structure and construction. The Building was built in response to the various disasters and destruction Japan had faced during and after World War 2. This changed the notion that Japanese cities, even built from natural materials, had temporality and a sense of an unpredictable lifespan.

The capsules were manufactured in a factory in Shiga Prefecture and transported to Tokyo by truck. They were then attached to the tower’s central beam. The capsules were designed to be removable and replaceable from the central beam. Even the seemingly small space inside the capsules can be modified and increased, simply by connecting each capsule together.



“Same Address, Less Backyard, More Formal Living Areas”

The Wijey family are a classic example of the Australian mentality that bigger is better. Instead of being sustainable and simply renovating to their single storey, fibro house, they Wijey's decided to give into the social norm and build the cheapest, biggest possible house on their narrow block of land. Companies such as HomeWorld are profiting from this mentality often promoting the knockdown and rebuild concept. The article 'Knockdown Rebuild Made the Dream Home in the Ideal Suburb a Reality' published 6/05/2008 on the HomeWorld website is the perfect example of the Australian housing obsession.

The Wijey's reasoned “by building a new home we were able to alter the design – achieving a home that is ideally suited to our needs and lifestyle,” said Mr Rajan³. The Wijey's ideal home was much larger than their existing house, they altered the plans of their Mc Mansion to suit their wants. The Wijey's decided instead of a double garage, that they would downsize to one garage and have a formal dining room instead. They also changed the plan from 4 bedrooms to three bedrooms with a bigger main bedroom and ensuite.

³Homeworld News, 06/05/08, 'Knockdown Rebuild Made the Dream Home in the Ideal Suburb a Reality', <<http://www.homeworld.com.au/news/articles/66/1/Knockdown-Rebrajuild-Made-The-Dream-Home-in-the-Ideal-Suburb-a-Reality>>

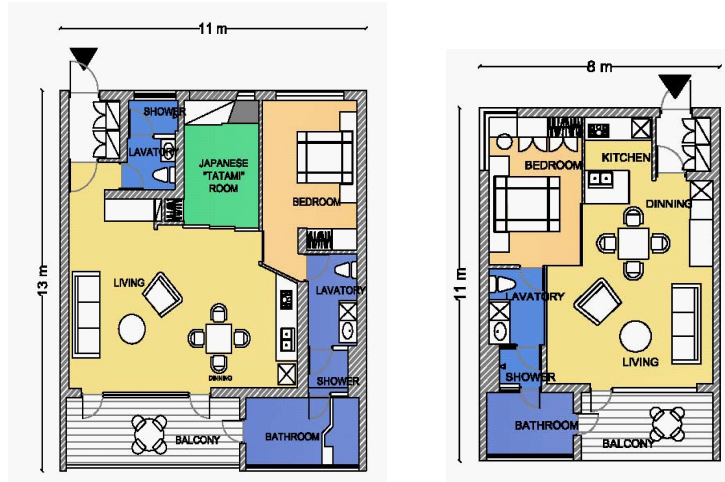
The Wijey's built a new house which tightly squeezed into the boundaries of their property, it contained three bedrooms, formal lounge and dining rooms, open plan family and kitchen area, upstairs sitting room and large balcony.

Mr Rajan says “We love the home in its entirety, however I do like the formal dining and living rooms as they have a particular appeal”. ³This ‘appeal’ of the formal dining and living areas is a social status statement, a response to society's attitude ‘my house is bigger’.



³ Homeworld News, 06/05/08, 'Knockdown Rebuild Made the Dream Home in the Ideal Suburb a Reality', <<http://f>>

“How dense is high density”

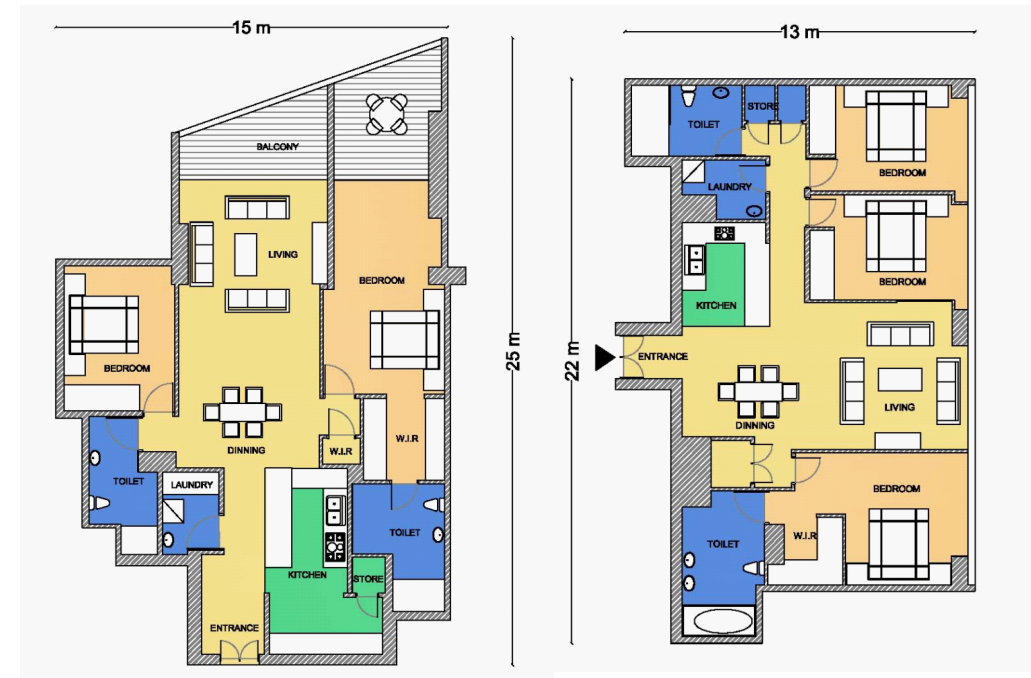


It is the first high-specification, eco-friendly housing at the foot of Japan's premiere ski fields.

Thirty-six apartments, divided among three blocks, are available in the development. The apartments display the stark housing density contrast between Japan and Australia. Both the two bedroom and one bedroom apartments provide the same spaces and have the same function, however in the Australian version the spaces are much larger.

The apartments are part of a large development for the Neisko Pwerhouse Ski Resort. It is ironic that the apartments, which are considered small and tight to Australian standards, are described as 'spacious, gourmet kitchens and international standards of luxury'³ on the advertisement brochure.

³ 2008, Neisko Powerhouse Brochure, p 7



The luxury apartments at Meriton World Tower are an international standard of its own. The apartments incorporate the latest design principles, catering for the complete luxury modern life. Between 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms. The apartments include every modern convenience, including study rooms and media alcoves, individually controlled air-conditioning and wiring for the TV and high speed internet access.

The advertising on the Meriton website describes the apartments as 'oversized'³ emphasizing the 'oversized' living area . The usage of the key term 'oversized' in apartment advertising highlights Australia's obsession with size. In Japan, the term 'oversized' living room would be considered a waste of space and bad design; here in Australia it is celebrated, used as a key advertising device.

³ Meriton World Tower, 2009, <<http://www.meritonapartments.com.au/default.asp?action=article&ID=21526>> ,viewed 15/03/10.

“ Australian Housing Detox. ”

The Australian housing obsession can only be tackled in one particular way. The answer is a complete ‘detox’ of all the unnecessary baggage which comes with the obsession of owning an Australian Dream home.

It is evident from the findings of this chapter that most western societies, through their desire of material possessions, have over indulged themselves. Our obsession with the home and housing has created a ripple effect of unpredictable impacts. We are in a period where the nation has over invested in property, where there is a lack of uniformity, everyone is quick to speculate, people are debt ridden and most people are suffering from the levels of risk, housing stress and who are increasingly unable to afford the Australian Dream. Political influences have mystified the lines between what’s affordable to you and what’s affordable to a multimillionaire

These issues are accountable through the unpredictable nature of politics, social and economic trends which in total has an impact on the quality of architecture and the livability in our suburban areas.

“ Learning from the Japanese ”

At first glance, many Australians would see the Japanese model as an insufficient housing model. Our capitalistic approach to life ensures that we constantly want the biggest and the best. Even though massive amounts of energy is spent in the planning and making of efficient space, the Australian understandings of spaces cannot comprehend living in such tight and small spaces. From this notion alone, the current Australian housing model has a lot to learn.

As portrayed in the Capsule Building, the Japanese were early in history able to understand the notion of densification. Whilst the Australians at the time were fussed about space for their ‘barbies’ and where to park their ‘mussel cars’, the Japanese were reshaping the way they saw the usefulness of space. This is highly reflected on the functionality of the traditional Japanese housing plan as every place has a purpose.

The idea of densification has already begun to creep into some of the Australian thinking. Seen predominately in the case of younger Australians, there has been a shift in their understanding of ‘what is their home’ and ‘what is affordable’. Their idea of affordability has changed as society makes it harder and harder for them to own their own Australian Dream.